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THIRD REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON SECURITY IN THE RWANDESE REFUGEE CAMPS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in response to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 10 February 1995 (S/PRST/1995/7), which followed the Council's consideration of my second report, dated 25 January, on security in the Rwandese refugee camps (S/1995/65) and my letter of 1 February (S/1995/127). In paragraph 7 of that statement, the Council requested me to continue my exploration of options and to make further recommendations necessary for ensuring security in the camps. It also requested me to submit a further report on this subject in the light of the outcome of the Regional Conference on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes Region, hosted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bujumbura.

2. In my report of 25 January (S/1995/65), I informed the Council of my consultations with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, regarding security in the refugee camps, especially those in Zaire. It was then decided that UNHCR would follow up with the Government of Zaire on the latter's earlier discussions with my Special Representative for Rwanda with a view to concluding appropriate arrangements, under UNHCR's mandate for refugee protection and humanitarian assistance, to enhance security in the camps.

3. On 27 January 1995, an aide-mémoire was signed between the Government of Zaire and UNHCR outlining specific measures to improve security in the camps in Zaire. Under the agreement, the Government of Zaire was to deploy a contingent of 1,500 military and police personnel - the Zairian Camp Security Contingent - to provide security in the camps, including measures to prevent violence, escort repatriation convoys, maintain law and order and control the crowds at food distribution sites.

4. In early February 1995, the first group of 100 personnel of the Zairian Camp Security Contingent arrived in Goma. As of 11 April, the Contingent stood at 913 troops operating in Kibumba, Katale/Kahindo and Mugumba/Lac Vert. Deployment sites are being prepared in south Kivu and are expected to be ready

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by the end of the month. UNHCR has assessed the performance of the Contingent as very satisfactory and cooperative.

5. In addition to the Zairian Contingent, UNHCR requested Governments to provide 35 to 60 international experts to serve in the Civilian Security Liaison Group. On 24 February, an advance group of 12 experts from the Netherlands arrived in Goma, where a total of 16 Netherlands experts have been deployed to date. The Government of Switzerland has provided one expert and the Governments of Benin, Burkina Faso and Cameroon have each offered to provide between 10 and 20 experts to serve in the Liaison Group. UNHCR also requested the Department of Peace-keeping Operations to select a senior military officer to serve as the Commander of the Liaison Group, under the authority of the UNHCR civilian official who is heading the Group. On the recommendation of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, UNHCR appointed Brigadier-General (retired) Ian Douglas of Canada, who has served in several peace-keeping operations. General Douglas took up his duties in Goma on 27 March 1995. The total cost of the security operation in Zaire, through the end of June, is estimated at $9.7 million.

II. PRESENT SITUATION IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS

A. Refugees in Burundi

6. In early April 1995, there were 240,000 refugees in Burundi, mostly from southern Rwanda. The deteriorating security situation in Burundi has affected the refugees inside and outside the camps. In the northern part of the country, where all seven refugee camps are located, there are constant movements of refugees fleeing to and from neighbouring countries at great risk to themselves. The strict border control by the army and the presence of uncontrolled armed groups in border areas have resulted in acts of violence, which have claimed several lives outside the camps. Although the refugee camps are guarded by the army and movements of refugees are restricted, incidents have also taken place inside the camps.

7. In view of the general insecurity in recent weeks, several thousand Rwandese refugees and a large number of Burundians have left Burundi for the United Republic of Tanzania. Between 17 February and 10 March, 16,000 Burundians and 8,000 Rwandese arrived in the United Republic of Tanzania from Burundi as refugees. In the last days of March, violence in Bujumbura unleashed a new exodus of refugees and sparked an outflow of 24,000 persons into Zaire. During the same period, some 70,000 Rwandese refugees left camps in northern Burundi for the United Republic of Tanzania; several thousand had slipped across the border before it was ordered closed by the Tanzanian Government. As of 5 April, 15,000 had been trucked back to two camps; the rest are scattered at various sites in northern Burundi.

B. Refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania

8. As of 26 March 1995, 600,000 refugees were in camps in the United Republic of Tanzania. The security situation in these camps remained relatively stable during the first two months of this year. In February, a joint UNHCR/United Republic of Tanzania/Netherlands mission made an assessment of the security requirements for the camps and estimated the total cost at $3 million. It recommended an increase of police personnel by 90, bringing the total to 400; an improvement in transport and logistics capacity; and arrangements for the maintenance of security in the camps.

9. In February, Tanzanian police escorted 200 returnees under tight security from the Benaco camp to the border town of Rusumo. Incidents within the camps, mainly of a criminal nature, against aid workers, the local population and the police increased in March and registration for repatriation virtually stopped.

C. Refugees in Zaire

10. In early April, there were 1.1 million refugees in the camps in Zaire. The immediate effect of the deployment of the security forces (the Zairian Camp Security Contingent and the Civilian Security Liaison Group) was to facilitate organized repatriation. The number of refugees departing from the Goma camps rose from 2,000 in January 1995 to 10,000 a month later. Repatriation declined substantially in March, however, partly as a result of reports reaching the refugees about increased arrests and detentions inside Rwanda.

11. Further contributing to that decline was the reduction of rations in the camps, necessitated by overall shortages of relevant food items in the region, although it was perceived by the refugees as a deliberate measure to force their repatriation. On 31 March, the food situation in the Goma camps was described by the World Food Programme (WFP) as critical. Surveys indicated that malnutrition in these camps was increasing. Acute food shortages continue, but positive changes are expected by UNHCR in the coming weeks following a regional meeting on logistics in Nairobi. The militia of the former Rwandese Government are exploiting the food shortage to incite the refugee population and reinforce their campaign against repatriation.

III. REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

12. The OAU/UNHCR Regional Conference on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes Region took place from 15 to 17 February 1995 in Bujumbura. It adopted a plan of action with a primary focus on voluntary repatriation as the preferred durable solution to the refugee problem. To achieve that goal, it underscored the roles to be played by the countries of origin, the countries of asylum and the international community. It also outlined specific measures to be taken in that regard.

13. In my message to the Conference, I stressed that there were both short-term and long-term solutions to the refugee problem. Security in the camps and

eradication of intimidation and blackmail of refugees are among the short-term measures. I stated further that solving the refugee problem in the long term would require the combined efforts of African Governments and the international community with the full involvement of the civil society.

14. Among other short-term actions, the Conference urged the earliest possible implementation of the Zaire/UNHCR agreement of 27 January 1995, which is now being successfully implemented. The Conference expressed the hope that a broader United Nations conference on peace, security and stability, as called for by the Security Council, would soon be held. Consultations on the holding of such a conference are continuing.

15. In addition, the Conference recognized that the problem of refugees, returnees and displaced persons was a global responsibility and it emphasized the need for equitable burden-sharing, taking into consideration that the asylum countries and the countries of origin are among the least developed. The international community was therefore urged to assist them through the adoption of concrete measures aimed at alleviating and redressing the negative impact on the local communities directly caused by the presence of refugees and displaced persons. To this end, the Conference requested the United Nations Development Programme to convene a round-table meeting of donors on the countries of the region, in order to coordinate the actions to be undertaken. Active preparations for such a meeting are already under way.

16. I am concerned that recent developments, such as the closure of borders and attacks on refugee camps, are in blatant disregard of the agreement reached in Bujumbura. I believe that the early implementation of some of the key recommendations of the Bujumbura Conference will contribute to resolving the refugee problem in the region. I appeal to all States to act in accordance with those recommendations.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

17. At the beginning of the month, UNHCR warned that only half of the food needs of the Rwandese refugees were available for distribution in April. The reduction of rations has led to the beginnings of malnutrition among women and children, as well as to the belief on the part of refugees that the international community is using food as a weapon to force them to return to their country.

18. The deteriorating food situation in the camps is a sign of serious fatigue on the part of donors faced with an increasing number of refugees and displaced persons around the world. I appeal to donor nations to reverse this situation so as not to worsen the plight of these refugees.

19. Both the Government of Rwanda and the international community are seriously concerned by persistent reports about arms shipments into Goma airport, allegedly for arming the former Rwandese government forces, as well as about the training of these forces on Zairian territory. These allegations have been rejected by the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Zaire to the United Nations in a communication transmitted to the Security Council on

6 April 1995. During the Bujumbura Conference, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zaire requested that an independent commission of inquiry be established to investigate and report on the matter. I therefore intend to hold consultations with the Governments of the countries concerned, as well as with OAU, on measures to respond to that request.

20. The deployment of the Zairian Camp Security Contingent and the Civilian Security Liaison Group in the refugee camps has so far proved to have had a positive effect. It is hoped that full deployment of the Zairian Contingent will further improve security conditions. Although this is strictly speaking beyond its mandate, its presence may also help in preventing unfortunate incidents such as the one that occurred on 11 April 1995, when unidentified men attacked the Birava camp, where the Zairian Contingent was about to be deployed. A total of 31 Rwandese refugees were killed in that attack.

21. However, the improvement of security conditions in the camps is not enough to ensure the voluntary repatriation of all the refugees. Ultimately, voluntary repatriation will depend on the efforts of the Government of Rwanda to promote genuine national reconciliation among all segments of Rwandese society and to ensure that refugees can return to their communities without fear of persecution. In that regard, I should like to stress once again that, in order to achieve that goal, more rapid and effective assistance from the international community is required.

22. Reports about numerous arrests and the overcrowded prisons in Rwanda have raised fears among the refugees and hindered the process of voluntary repatriation. This has resulted in the decline in the number of returnees from 200 persons a week to 200 a month.

23. Rebuilding the Rwandese justice system remains an important factor in contributing to the creation of conditions conducive to the return of refugees, and efforts by the Government of Rwanda in that direction should be supported. The international community has already pledged $618 million to support the Government's rehabilitation and reconstruction programme, including rebuilding the justice system. Most of these pledges, however, have not yet been translated into actual assistance. Meanwhile, most of the contributions to the Trust Fund for Rwanda, amounting to $4,710,857 as at 1 April, are being disbursed to support the Rwandese justice system.

24. In its resolution 978 (1995) of 27 February, the Security Council urged Member States to arrest and detain persons found within their territory against whom there was sufficient evidence of responsibility for acts within the jurisdiction of the International Tribunal for Rwanda. Implementation of that resolution by Member States will also enhance the process of national reconciliation and an early return of the refugees.

25. Only the combined efforts of the countries of origin, the countries of asylum and the international community can achieve the enormous task of ensuring that all the refugees and the displaced persons in the Great Lakes region voluntarily return to their homes and communities. I appeal to all Member States to take the actions that are so urgently required.